

Resolutions

by Hawkeye

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Summary: Captain Bridger is reunited with an old friend, forcing him to look into the past.

Resolutions

SeaQuest 2033: Resolutions

_ Nathan Bridger, captain of the _ Valiant, _ flagship of the navy, piloted his ship around the enemy scum, despite the fires burning at his arms and the screaming of his unenlightened and inexperienced crew. Brilliantly he saved the day at the ripe young age of sixteen. As he turned to sneer at his cowardly first officer, to scold him for wanting run away, his eyes fell upon- _

_ A stranger. A young girl his age, reading a book._

_ "Can I help you?" she asked, looking up from her book and smiling softly. He blushed, shy of how far his imagination carried him. _

_ "Uh, I'm looking for Commander Bridger. He said he'd meet me here." He stuttered. Her smiled broadened. _

_ "Are you his son, Nathan?" she asked. He nodded, dumbfounded. She pulled a menu out of the pocket next to the waiter's stand. "He's back through there. Third table on the right. You can't miss him, he's the only one there." She pointed behind her as she spoke. Nathan smiled back and took the menu she handed him. _

_ "Thanks." _

_ "Sure. I'll be right along to take your order." She replied. _

_ "Great." He liked this girl. He hoped to see more of her. "Say, what book is that?" he asked, trying to make conversation._

_ "_20,000 leagues under the sea._" She replied._

_ "Really? I love that book." He grinned._

_ "Me too." They exchanged a few words before he decided he'd better go to his father. He excused himself and followed her directions. He soon saw his father. His dad waved, even though the girl was right, he was the only one there. He ventured over to the table and sat down._

_ "It's about time, son." His father spoke harshly. Nathan's smile diminished a little. "But I'm glad to see you." His face brightened at his father's words. _

_ "Who was that girl at the entrance? She wasn't here last time." Nathan asked eagerly. His father smiled. _

_ "That's Darin. She's John's daughter, which explains how she got the job." His father replied. John Williams was the owner of the hangout Nathan and his father often met at. He was also a former navy commander. He retired early when he lost his leg in 89'. That same year he bought the restaurant and managed to keep it up and running for three years, up to now._

_ "Hey guys. Do you need something to drink?" Darin asked as she came up to the table. Nathan looked at her and smiled. She smiled back.

_

_ "Sure. But I have to go, I'm afraid." His father spoke, eyeing his son. Nathan was oblivious to his father's comment. "Business seems to be a little slow, why don't you join my son here?" he added as he stood up. _

_ Darin seemed surprised, and Nathan seemed willing._

_ "O.K., sure. Sounds like fun." She agreed._

Nathan Bridger shifted uncomfortably in his seat. The launch was taking a boringly long time to reach it's destination. He sighed and tried to sleep. He couldn't wait to set foot on SeaQuest again. When he had been asked to attend the peace summit, he had originally said no. But time passed, and he realized the opportunity to see the magnificent ship again. A decade ago SeaQuest was a dream. Now it was the flagship of the UEO. He couldn't help but feel proud.

But now he was upset. He was told it would take an hour and a half to reach the ship and it had been at least two hours. He put his feet up on the mattress like seat of the launch. Unsatisfied, he got up and stuck his head in the cockpit.

"Hey, why aren't we there yet?" he asked somewhat bitterly. The pilot jumped.

"I'm sorry, sir. You were asleep when we got the order. One of the other ambassadorial launches broke down. We've been diverted to pick up the passenger." The pilot replied, oblivious to the bitterness in the captain's voice.

"Which ambassador is it?" Nathan asked. "Ambassador Williams." The pilot responded. "Williams?" The pilot nodded. The name rang a bell, but it was a common one. Out the window, Nathan could see a small

station. He assumed that was their destination. He sighed and returned to his seat. He had been asleep for all of five minutes. They could have told him when he woke up.

He felt the shudder as the launch docked into the station that had seemed so distant a moment ago. He waved the pilot by and remained in his position, feet up on the 'couch'. He watched as the pilot punched the release button and the door slid open. In stepped someone he hadn't seen in a long time.

"How come every time I show up, you're asleep?" Darin Williams asked with a smile. Nathan grinned and stood. They gave each other a friendly hug and then sat down. "Are you speechless?"

"Yes. Yes I am. It's been a while." He replied. She nodded.

"Brought together once again, and all because the UEO managed to suckered us into this gig." She exclaimed. As they talked, Nathan's mind drifted back to the days when he and Darin were always with each other.

"So who's this new girl?" Darin asked as she flipped over her lead card. Nathan sighed at his loss and threw his cards into the pile.

_ "Her name is Carol. I think she might be the one." He replied as she dealt the next hand. They were sitting on a picnic bench in the cool shade. The summer of '01 was a hot one in Southern California, but the two best friends decided to go for their vacation there anyway. He'd be returning to Pearl Harbor soon anyway, so they just rested around the beach town of Santa Monica._

_ "Didn't you just meet her?" she asked as she tossed a card at him. He caught it with a grin._

_ "Yeah, a week ago, but she ignites a fire within my heart that I've never known before. I can't describe it." he said as he looked at his cards._

_ "Really? And when did we learn to speak like this?" Darin mocked. He gave a short chuckle._

_ "That's what I mean. I'm doing things that I can't normally do. I can talk like you for once." He replied. He traded cards with the deck and stared at his hand again. Darin did the same. _

_ "Full house. How does she feel about you being in the Navy?" she asked as she flipped over the five cards. He placed his cards face up on the table. _

_ "Four of a kind. I don't think it bothers her. Anyway, I can't wait to introduce you two." He remarked as he shuffled the cards. _

_ "Be glad to meet her. When?" Darin asked as she took the cards he dealt her. _

_ "She's coming into town for awhile. I thought the three of us could have dinner. Unless, you got a guy to make it a foursome." He hinted. She smiled and shook her head. _

_ "You know me. They have to be perfect to even stand a chance." She replied as she peeked at her cards._

_ "When will that change?" he asked. She looked at him with a grin._

_ "When the right guy comes along."_

As the launch approached the massive flagship, the two ambassadors peered out the window.

"What are you thinking about, Nathan?" Darin asked as they watched the ship get closer.

"That day of playing poker in Santa Monica." He replied honestly.

"Wow. I haven't thought about that in a long time. That was the day you introduced me to Carol." She paused. "You were right."

"About what?" he looked at her. She was staring out the window, the blue glare of the ocean reflected in her eyes. Her brown eyes seemed to glow with life. He had never seen them like this before, in the thirty-some-odd years they'd known each other.

"She was the one. . . for you." She added. He returned his gaze to the window.

"But not for you." He murmured. She looked at him abruptly.

"What's that supposed to mean?" she asked with a somewhat shocked grin.

"Oh, admit it. You never liked her very much." He looked back as he spoke. She stared at him.

"That's not true. You loved her and that was more than enough for me." She exclaimed. He sighed and smiled.

"Whatever. Watch." He added as he pointed out the window. She followed his gaze. They grew closer and closer to the wondrous ship ahead of them, and every inch closer they got, something new appeared. Nathan looked at her briefly, to see the glow had returned. It made her seem somewhat majestic.

Captain Oliver Hudson stood at attention as the two ambassadors Captain Bridger and Captain Williams strode through the docking latch.

"Welcome aboard." He spoke stiffly and saluted. Bridger saluted back, as did Williams, then they all relaxed and smiled.

"Oliver, I'd like to introduce Darin Williams. Darin, this is Captain Oliver Hudson." He introduced the two strangers, who shook hands pleasantly.

"Pleasure to meet you." Darin remarked. Oliver nodded and returned the comment. He then turned to the officers standing at attention behind him.

"I'd like to introduce Lieutenant Commander Heiko Kimura and Ensign Lucas Wolenczak." He pointed as he spoke. He then added. "They're the only two officers who aren't busy running around at the moment."

"Nice to meet you. Lucas Wolenczak, huh?" Darin peered back at Nathan who nodded and smiled. "Heard a lot about you, kid." She added and held out her hand. He smiled at Nathan and then at Darin, shaking her hand.

"Commander, I don't believe we've met." Nathan addressed the young woman next to Lucas.

"I've only been a member of the crew for about a month now." She replied and held out her hand. He smiled and shook it.

"We've got a whole hand-shaking fest here." Darin remarked. The small group laughed softly.

"Well, allow us to escort you to your quarters." Said Lucas. Darin nodded and reached for her bag. He held out a hand. "Allow me, please." She smiled at Nathan then back to him and shrugged. Lucas picked up her bag and slung it over his shoulder. Kimura grabbed Nathan's and they set out on their way.

_"Have you set a date, you little lovebird, you?" Darin asked as she polished her boot that went with her dress uniform. Nathan shrugged while he continued to sketch on his scratch paper. _

_"Not officially." He replied. It had been a year and a half since that fateful day he met the woman he proposed to the night before. He informed his best friend not moments ago as she prepared for a promotion ceremony. She was going to be a Lieutenant already. The navy appreciated a lot of the work she did for them. The UEO suggested she be promoted and it was granted. _

_ So at age nineteen, Darin Williams was to become one of the youngest people in the navy to be promoted within a year of signing up. Nathan knew she wasn't a warrior. She was destined to be behind a desk, trying to prevent war, while he was destined to be out fighting it. He couldn't imagine the navy without the run and gun. Darin told him it was because he was still a boy, hadn't matured yet. _

_ He enjoyed the scientific aspect as much as the warrior aspect, and he felt that made him as mature as Darin was. Darin liked the science, the engineering and the politics. If she kept getting promoted, they'd have to develop a new rank higher than Admiral. _

_ "Did you tell Bill?" she asked. _

_ "Noyce? That kid? Why would he care?" Nathan replied. _

_ "He's older than you, Nathan. Anyway, he thinks you're his best friend. Who knows, maybe one day he'll be your boss." She responded with a laugh._

_ "Very funny. That'll be the day." He retorted. _

Lucas had shown Darin to her quarters a few minutes ago, where she

confessed to feeling tired and went to take a nap. Captain Hudson had returned to the bridge. Now this Lt. Cmdr. Kimura showed him to guest quarters. Part of him wanted to redirect her to Captain's quarters. He wanted to go back there, to take command of this ship again.

It was his dream. It was his baby. That day he announced his engagement to Darin, that day the SeaQuest had come to him. He still had that sketch that depicted what he was now walking around on. It was the scientist inside him that started doodling on the scratch paper. True, this ship was a second-generation version with tons of changes from the original.

He remembered that on that day Darin told him that the sketch was a good one. He was nineteen that day. That was ages ago. Bill Noyce had become his good friend and his superior officer. He had married Carol three months later, and Robert had been born. Many things had changed since that day. That day was thirty-eight years ago, and he hadn't thought about it in a while. In fact he wasn't sure if he had ever thought about that day after it occurred.

The commander pushed the door open and entered the room that was much smaller than the captain's quarters. She placed his bag on the small bed and turned. She nodded her respect to the weary captain and stood at attention.

"Is there anything else sir?" she asked dutifully. He shook his head. Part of him was grinning broadly on the inside, and frowning at the same issue. He read somewhere the story of this Chaodai officer joining the UEO and how it involved several daring maneuvers that were performed by Piccolo and Tim O'Neill, and killed Fredericks.

He sighed and returned to reality, only to find the officer gone. He sighed and found that his attitude was much like Darin had confessed. Tired and most willing to take a long nap. After all, the trip to the summit was going to take about three days, much longer than the launch trip. He tossed the bag on the ground and lay down on the bed, tried to go to sleep. The past was lingering in his mind, and soon to be in his dreams as well.

"You're gonna name him Robert, huh?" Lieutenant Commander Darin asked as she sipped the drink Carol had brought her. The two gushing parents-to-be nodded.

_ "All right, but you got to remember that Darin works for boys and girls." She exclaimed with a smile. They all laughed. After being married to Carol for two years, they were expecting their first child, a boy, to be named Robert. Nathan realized she was the third person to suggest her own name. _

_ Malcolm Downy and Bill Noyce were the two others to suggest names. 'Malcolm' and 'William' weren't the Bridgers idea of a name to go for their son. For some reason, Nathan had suggested 'Darwin', but later realized it didn't feel quite right for the occasion. Finally, he and Carol settled on 'Robert'. Robert Bridger. That felt right. Maybe the kid would join the navy one day._

_ "You two kids sure look perfect together." Darin said softly. Nathan smiled and kissed Carol softly on the head. His life was working out fantastically. His love, his best friends, and now a son.

He was becoming a man. He wasn't the immature boy that Darin called him two years ago. He was now a husband and a father, as well as a Lieutenant. _

_ He had reached the rank she had reached then. Only she got promoted as well. She still commanded him on their ship, but that had nothing to do with their friendship. It wasn't pure luck they were assigned together. She fought to get him on her ship, and he had to live up to the reputation she gave him. _

_ "So is this one the first of many?" Darin asked with a sly grin.
_

"So Frankie, where are you anyway?" 'Hawkeye' asked. Lucas typed in his response. Almost immediately, the 3-D figure on the screen in front of him mouthed the words.

"Why do you want to know all of a sudden?" the green figure grunted. The other figure on screen was just a plain human with a bird's head, specifically a hawk's head, and a huge eye.

"I think I'm near by, and if I'm right, then you're a little old to be hanging around on the net." The bird replied. Lucas was somewhat surprised.

"Where are you?" the computer replied for him.

"On the SeaQuest. Am I nearby?" the bird answered.

"What? Who are you?" he wished he could make the figure as frantic as he was. The bird just gave a squawk and left the screen.

"Hawkeye, where are you?" Frankie yelled.

"Right through the door." Lucas heard behind him. He spun around, and there stood the Ambassador/Captain Darin Williams.

"It appears we know each other better than we originally thought, Frankie boy." She said with a smile. He grinned.

"You're Hawkeye?" he spoke enthusiastically. She nodded. "This is even more awesome than meeting Mycroft."

"Well, thank you. I think. Mycroft was insane." She replied as she entered the room and found a seat.

"Well, yes and no . . ." and so began their conversation, a conversation that lead deep into the night, and to the start of a great friendship.

Nathan woke up with a start. The memory of the day he 'introduced' his son to Darin was the theme of his dream, only now a component jumped at him. She was happy for them, he knew that, but there was something else in her voice. Something that he couldn't find words for. '_You two kids sure look perfect together._' She had said. She said it softly, almost as a regret or a jealousy. Was she jealous of their life? Was she jealous that they were a family?

Darin had chosen to be a navy career officer. Granted, at the time, that was Nathan's choice as well, but his mind changed. It changed

before he had 'matured', though. Hers changed after 'maturing', if it did change at all.

Darin left the navy a year or two before Nathan did. Before the incident with Robert and Nathan's promise to Carol. Before that, and though he knew the technical reason, he never knew the real one, because he suspected the one she gave him wasn't the truth.

Nathan always felt that Darin was his best friend, even though when he first met her, friendship wasn't foremost on his mind. He started his life young. Married at 19, a child at 21 and his life was on track. There were times that he felt he started too early. He was a family man and a naval officer, just like his father. Maybe more of a family man than his father, but he was still proud of the whole package.

_"Say cheese!" Darin exclaimed as she snapped the picture of the new family. Robert gave a little gurgle as he rested in his mother's arms. He had only been born an hour ago, and he already was adapting to the 'outside' world. _

_ "Oh, he's going be a strong fella, isn't he?" she cooed. Nathan smiled and took Robert from Carol's arms. He looked deeply into his son's eyes and felt a warmth that he loved from minute one. _

_ "Hey Darin, why don't you hold him?" Carol offered wearily. The ritual of childbirth had tired her out, but she was determined to watch her son for as long as she could stay awake. Nathan carefully placed the baby in Darin's waiting, and somewhat uncertain, arms. She smiled as the boy nestled safely in her arms. Nathan gave his wife a look, and she nodded with a soft smile._

_ "Darin, we have a favor to ask you." Nathan asked slowly. Darin looked up from the little miracle. She glanced between the two parents, getting a little more confused and nervous each second._

_ "Well, what?" she asked since they didn't say anything more._

_ "We'd like you to be Robert's godmother." Carol whispered. Darin grew a shocked smile._

_ "Wow. I don't know what to say." She exclaimed._

_ "Then say yes." Nathan laughed._

_ "Yes, definitely. With pleasure." She replied with a grin. She returned her gaze to the child in her arms. "Oh, yes. With pleasure." She repeated as she fingered the infant softly. She parted with Robert, placing him once again in his mother's arms. She then strode over to Nathan._

_ "So dad, how goes the boat sketching?" she asked softly as they both watched the mother and son giggle together._

_ "It's still preliminary." He replied. He was a father. He was sketching some more schematics when he got the call that his wife had gone into labor. So at age 21, he was given the gift of Robert Bridger, a son. As he watched his family murmur to each other, he heard Darin's voice say: _

_ "Way to go, Nathan." _

"Nathan, are you going to sleep all day?" Darin asked as she pushed the door to his quarters open.

"What? Huh? How did you get in here?" he muttered as he stirred from his brief doze.

"You didn't lock the door before you started snoozing." She replied and sat down in a chair opposite his bed. He sat up in bed and leaned against the wall at the head of his bed.

"So you just welcomed yourself right in, did you?" he asked with a smile. She grinned back and gave a deep, serious, mock nod.

"You bet. Besides, the big celebratory dinner is in five minutes." She said. He sat up straight.

"What celebratory dinner? Hudson didn't say anything to me." He exclaimed worriedly.

"Our reunion dinner. Come on, we haven't seen each other since 15'." She replied. Nathan relaxed and smiled.

"You mean since you disappeared?" he asked, grinning. She shrugged.

"Hey, we've all done it at some time or another." She responded. "Even you. I just did it first."

"Yeah, you beat me to it."

"Not by much, I hear." She retorted as she stood up. "Now come on. Let's go get some chow." Nathan nodded and got up from his warm little bed.

"Captain Bridger? Sir, I have a message for you." The young officer addressed his superior officer sorrowfully.

_ "Well, what is it?" Nathan replied. The junior officer handed him a small telegram. Carol gasped as Nathan opened up. The words enclosed hit him harder than he was prepared for. He fell back into his chair, tears rushing to his eyes. His son Robert, freshly into the navy, was killed in action. His body wasn't even found. Carol knelt in shock at his feet and he drew her close. The two grieving parents held each other, crying over the loss of their son. _

_ Eyes still wet, Nathan looked up and he saw Darin somberly staring at them, tears in her eyes as well. He held out his hand and she walked forward to grasp it. Carol looked up at her, tears flowing down her cheek. She stood up and hugged the godmother of her child. Darin wrapped her arms around her and the three grieving adults just stood there, crying of the loss of a common love. _

_ On the floor below them, the bustle of the press and several scientists continued, unaware that their colleague's life had just changed drastically, and mournfully. _

_ Five days later, Bridger friends and family from all around stood in the national cemetery, staring at the grave dedicated to the

eighteen-year-old boy that had died on his first assignment. As the priest made his soft prayer, Nathan's eyes drifted to where Darin had stood. All he saw was an empty space. His eyes frantically searched the scene and he spotted someone walking away. _

_ The person stopped and looked back. It was Darin. Their eyes connected over the hundred yards. Their pain connected. He saw something he'd never seen before in her eyes. It was a pain she had never confessed. It wasn't just about Robert's death, though that played a major part. In her eyes, there was an aged hurt, a heartache he'd never seen before. _

_ She smiled weakly and gave a short wave. He tried to wave back, but he couldn't. The strong feeling that something was happening held him back. His eyes welled up a little more and he could see the tears on her cheek. She turned away and stood there for a second. After a pause, she continued to walk up the small green hill. Within a minute, she disappeared from sight. _

_ Little did Nathan know, that it would be a long time before he saw or heard from his best friend again. For on that day, Captain Darin Williams disappeared._

"How long have you been back in the world?" Nathan asked as he munched on some of the chicken he had picked up for himself.

"I've always been in the world, Nathan. Just hidden away. Just like you made that promise to Carol, I made a promise to myself." Darin replied, also chewing on some chicken.

"How'd you know about that?" Nathan exclaimed, shocked because he had never mentioned his promise to her.

"I've been talking to your young mister Wolenczak while you were dozing off." She responded, oblivious to her friend's shock. She sipped her drink and looked at her friend. Nathan just smiled and drank from his glass.

The two friends sat in the crew mess, eating meals that they had picked out of a kind of buffet. There weren't any other crewmen in there with them. Everyone was getting ready for the big peace summit. Everyone had an assignment to get the SeaQuest ready for their arrival. Captain Hudson wanted his ship in prime shape for their arrival. He wanted to show it off.

"But how long have you been unhidden?" Nathan rephrased the question.

"You know the UEO. When they really want you, they find you." She replied. He nodded. When they wanted him to captain SeaQuest, they managed to find him. Of course, Noyce had always known where he was. On his island, performing experiments with Darwin.

Nathan had been alone on that island since Carol died. There were times when he thought he saw Darin watching him from afar, but he convinced himself that it was impossible. She was gone. She had retired from the navy, sold all her assets. Wherever she was, she was alone, rich and happy. If she felt it necessary to leave him behind on that day, why would she spy on him now?

And then his life jumpstarted. He took command of the SeaQuest, he had become a prominent scientist again. He met Lucas, and Kristin Westphalen. He had discovered there was a chance his young son could still be alive. He left SeaQuest and the navy behind to search for him and to become an independent scientist. He had his adventures. And now he was a representative in the worldwide peace summit. And so was Darin. The summit reunited them.

It was as if no time had passed. They were best friends again. Chatting over food about what life was like for them now. They had come a long way from the two sixteen-year-olds in John Williams' restaurant. They had life experiences, pain and joy. And they had reached their goals. They had been naval captains, scientists and mysterious persons. They had been heroes and they had become greatly respected people. Unfortunately, they had also become their parents.

"So, Nathan. You named the dolphin 'Darwin'. Do you remember when-" Darin's comment was interrupted by the rocking of the ship. The two seasoned captains automatically braced their hands on the table and waited for the shift to stop.

"What was that?" she asked slowly. Within a second, the two adults were on their way to the bridge.

"Return fire! Where did they come from?" Hudson asked angrily. His temper was shooting off the scale. Captains Bridger and Williams emerged on to the bridge and stopped.

"What's going on?" Nathan asked first over the ruckus. Hudson held up a hand, signifying he was trying to find out.

"Why aren't we returning fire?" Hudson barked.

"The first blast fused some of the weaponry circuitry. One of the chip boards is fried." Lucas replied as fast as he could.

"Can you fix it?" the captain replied gruffly.

"Yes sir. But not from here." Lucas replied. He started to stand up when Darin held up a hand.

"Where is it? You're needed here." She asked. Lucas looked at captain Hudson, who gave a short nod.

"B deck. Section 23." He tossed Darin a repair kit and she took off through the doors, Nathan right after her. He wasn't about to let her do it herself. He built this ship and he could help her.

They darted through the somewhat panicking crew and tried to make their way to the B deck.

"Sir, they're firing again." Piccolo informed. The ship shook with the blow that Tony had reported seconds before.

"We have a main pipe break." Henderson reported. Hudson glanced at her and nodded.

"Close it off."

As Darin and Nathan were two feet away from section 23, a main pipe broke ahead of them. As the watertight doors started to close, Darin didn't stop. She charged through the doors, barely skimming through in time. Nathan's heart jumped a beat. He ran to the now shut and locked door and peered through the small window that was implanted into the door.

Inside, Darin knelt in front of the fused circuit board. Water hissed slowly out of the pipe above her as she tried to configure the small panel in front of her. She pulled one tool after another out to try to repair the fried console. Oblivious to the fact she might drown in there, she managed to get quite far in the repairs. At one point she stopped. She looked around in the repair kit which was now floating in shin-high water.

Dejected, she darted over to the Comm unit on the wall next to the door.

"Nathan, is there a circuit board in here that uses blue D-25's?" she asked as she pressed the button. "Other than the weapon circuitry?" He choked back tears he felt was inevitable, because there was only one other system that used the blue D-25 chip. The pumping siphons. He nodded slowly.

"Which one?" she asked frantically. "The pumping siphons." He replied softly. She paused for only a split second. For a half a second, they stared at each other, realizing the fate of the decision. Then she ripped herself away from the wall over to the pumping siphons. She pulled off the cover and searched the contents. She pulled out the chip with such a hurried force that Nathan felt it in his heart.

She returned to the circuitry for the weapons and slammed the chip into it's designated spot. She slammed down the cover of the panel and darted back to the Comm unit.

"_Williams to Bridge. All's go._" Darin's voice rang through the Comm speakers on the bridge. Hudson grinned.

"Fire at will. Give em' hell!" he ordered. Piccolo grinned.

"With pleasure, sir." as the battle raged on, Lucas was troubled. The only way the weapons could work would be if Darin were in Section 23 on B deck. Or captain Bridger was. But didn't Lt. Henderson close that section off? Wasn't there a pipe break there?

He checked the computer. She did. So someone was in there. He distantly heard Tony report that the enemy ship had been disabled and captain Hudson order everyone to stand down. Lucas looked at captain Hudson, who spied his glance. An invisible communication transferred between their eyes. And before the captain could say anything, Lucas took off.

Confused, Ford started after him, but Hudson placed his hand on his shoulder. The first officer looked to his captain, who merely shook his head.

"Lieutenant Henderson, where was that pipe break?" the captain asked as he continued to look at his first officer.

"Uh, B deck, section. . . . 23." She replied slowly. Now Ford understood. A silent field of sadness descended on the bridge.

"Activate the pumping siphons." Ford ordered urgently.

"Yes sir." she nodded, then stopped.

"What is it, Lieutenant?" Ford asked worriedly.

"The pumping siphon has been disabled, sir." she responded softly and slowly. The field grew denser.

"Hey, Nathan. What's wrong?" Darin asked shakily through the Comm unit. He gave a weak smile that quickly dissipated.

"This can't happen, Darin. If anyone should be behind there, it's me." He replied weakly.

"Or me." Lucas said softly behind him. Nathan turned his head and smiled, before returning his gaze to his drowning friend.

"That's not true." Darin whispered through the wall. "Lucas, you're still a kid with a life ahead of you. And Nathan, you have to find Robert, for both our sakes." Lucas' eyes watered slightly at her words, as did Nathan's. Nathan couldn't tell, but he thought Darin's eyes were wet too.

"And what about what you have to live for?" Nathan whispered back.

"You're the only thing I have to live for, Nathan. And I did this to save you." She replied softly. The first tear rolled down his cheek.

"You know Nathan, I loved Carol like a sister. It broke my heart when she died." Darin spoke hesitantly, as if she were revealing a secret. Nathan's attention was clasped.

"She just had something I wanted." She continued. Nathan sighed.

"What? What did she have that you couldn't if you wanted it?" he asked slowly, assuming all his thoughts of this morning were true. Darin was jealous of his family, of their love. But she could have gotten it if she tried. She never dated much, or gave guys a chance.

"You, Nathan. Your heart and your love." She responded even more hesitantly than before. This hit Nathan as a release. She loved him. That explained more than his deduction had.

"I don't know what to say." He replied softly. She smiled.

"I didn't either, every time I saw you. I guess my current situation is kind of encouraging me to tell you this." She looked around as she spoke, surveying the small section of a room. Behind him, Lucas blended into the background, knowing this was something to watch, not take part in.

"I wish I knew before." Nathan murmured. She nodded.

"I wish I told you before." She offered. She placed her hand on the window. He placed his hand on the glass, wishing he could get her out of there. The water was rising and if he opened the door, he wouldn't be able to close again. The ship would be in peril again. He knew she wouldn't let him. One life or several hundred. She would give hers for those odds.

"Nathan, would you do me a favor? Both of you, actually." She addressed Lucas as well as she pulled her hand away. Nathan searched her face as he withdrew his hand.

"What?" he asked.

"Go somewhere else than here. Go play with Darwin. Go think about something else." She replied. Confused, he shook his head.

"No." he said simply. She smiled weakly.

"Nathan, the water is up to my waist here. I don't want you just hanging around, waiting for it to go above my head." She exclaimed. He sighed, a somewhat hurt expression on his face.

"Darin, I'm not just going to leave you." He persisted.

"I know, Nathan. I know." She responded. With that, her face disappeared from the window.

"Darin! Darin, get back here." He shouted into the unit, but she was gone. She wasn't going to say anything else. She had a way of wanting things and doing her best to get them.

"Captain-" Lucas spoke up. Nathan turned to him. "Let's go play with Darwin."

"You want to just act like nothing's happening?" he retorted.

"No, I don't. I want to remember Darin by fulfilling her last request." The young ensign replied. Nathan thought about it and glanced back to the empty window. Water was approaching the bottom of the window. He knew if he stared into the window long enough, he'd see her again.

Nathan sighed and walked over to Lucas. He patted the young man on the back and walked away from the room that held his best friend, and the ocean that was killing her. The ocean that both he and Darin loved.

Darin stood in the cramped compartment and sighed. The water was passing her waist. At this rate she had about ten minutes left in here. She sighed and looked around her. Her eyes fell on the repair kit, still floating around open. She waded through the water over to it and rummaged through the contents. Her hand fell on a tool she didn't recognize.

She picked it up, pointed it away from her and activated it. A small pulse emitted from it that she didn't expect. She deactivated it and looked at the place where the pulse had landed. It had connected with the glass of the aqua tunnel. She waded through the water and pressed

her fingers to the contact spot. Water sprouted out of a small hole the pulse had created. A laser cutter. She realized. Then an idea sprung on her.

Nathan Bridger stood on the edge of the moon bay, silence surrounding him. Lucas softly splashed with Darwin below him. Neither said anything, despite the cries from Darwin, requesting information. Nathan's mind sped around trying to ascertain the exact moment the room would be full. The exact moment hope drained out of existence for Darin.

"It should be over now." Lucas whispered. Nathan nodded slowly in agreement.

"What is over?" Darwin 'asked'.

"Our friend." Nathan replied.

"Not quite." A familiar voice groaned. Nathan knew that voice. His eyes searched for the source, as did Lucas's. They looked around.

"Over here, guys." They followed the direction of the voice. There, hanging on for dear life to the edge to the moon bay, was Darin. A small gash had found it's way on her forehead, and she clutching her chest. Without a second thought, Nathan dove in to the bay and swam the twenty feet over to her.

He wrapped his arm around her waist and took hold of her. She released herself to his grasp and slowly her eyes drifted shut.

"Oh, no you don't." he muttered as he dragged her to the edge he stood atop just a moment before. As he and Lucas pulled her up on to the floor, a medical alert team entered through the door, captain Hudson right behind them.

As they loaded Darin up on the stretcher, Hudson tossed Bridger a towel. The soaked captain caught it with a jump.

"How'd you know?" Lucas asked slowly as Nathan started to dry himself off. The three officers followed the medical team as Hudson replied.

"We have all sorts of sensors in the aqua tubes. You should know that. When she broke through, she set off a sensor alert. When she broke through and started swimming through, we detected it. The rest is history." He explained. Lucas nodded as if to verify it. As if to say, 'sounds about right'.

Bridger smiled weakly as they reached the sickbay.

Darin opened her eyes weakly. The lights hurt her eyes. Were the lights heaven? Or did the memories she had of breaking into the aqua tubes real? Was she alive? She turned her head softly and slowly. Her eyes fell on Nathan Bridger, who was asleep in the chair next to her. Seeing him there, meant the answer was both. She was alive and in heaven.

It struck her. _You told him. You told him and lived._ She groaned as

the feeling of restriction surged in her side. One groan was all it took. Lucas appeared in sight, and Nathan sat up abruptly, as if he hadn't been asleep.

"Hey there. About time you woke up." Nathan whispered. She smiled, forgetting about the pain. Nathan smiled back. She glanced at Lucas, who was grinning. She wanted to respond, but she couldn't find the words. Then, as if reading her mind, Nathan continued.

"You're in pretty good shape, considering. A couple broken ribs where the glass hit you. A couple of cuts here and there. Not much oxygen deprivation or sea water in your lungs." He exclaimed. She shrugged softly. She looked back and forth between Lucas and her best friend.

Satisfied that she was alive and well, she let her eyes slowly close. She allowed herself to drift back to sleep.

Nathan leaned back from Darin. He sighed. Lucas' grin softened a little and he sat back down. Nathan smiled at the young man. Lucas was so much older than that first day on SeaQuest, but he would always be a kid to Nathan. Despite the cocky and somewhat insulting first conversation they had together, Nathan took the kid under his wing. They were father and son, even though Lucas had a real father to take that spot. It didn't matter.

Now there was a little triangle of friendship. Lucas told him about how through the Internex, he and Darin had really known each other for about three years. They were a trio all of a sudden.

But not really. Nathan knew that he and Darin had been best friends in a way that couldn't be understood by anyone else. Now, Darin had confessed her secret. She loved him. She had loved him since his time with Carol. Since before even. Maybe.

How would he reply when she did wake up for a little longer than twenty seconds? Should he? Well, he should. He couldn't just ignore what she said, could he? No, and he didn't want to. He looked inside himself to find his answers, and the ones he got confused him.

He returned his mind to reality and his eyes fell on her sleeping face. He heard the doctor telling him he should go get something to eat. There wasn't anything else he could do right now. He heard himself agree. Through his own eyes, he saw as he got up, grabbed Lucas and dragged him to the crew mess. After that, he wearily returned to his quarters to sleep in a bed, and not a chair. But the thoughts of the day haunted him, even in his sleep.

"No, not that one. The other one." Darin barked. The medic sighed and placed the book that was in his hand back on the shelf. She was an easier person to deal with when she was sleeping all the time.

A week had passed. The summit had been delayed due to the attack, which was assumed to be an attempt on the lives of ambassadors Williams and Bridger. The enemy ship had been apprehended, but the people inside wouldn't say who had hired them.

Now the chief medical officer of SeaQuest allowed Darin to return to her quarters under the supervision of a different medic each shift. Darin was now trying to get the medic of the hour to retrieve her

book. This was the scene when Nathan Bridger knocked on her door for the first time in a week.

"Come in. No, the blue one!" she bickered. Nathan wandered in to the middle of her shout. The medic sighed and returned the current wrong selection back to the shelf.

"Hey, kid. Take a break. I'll take care of her for a few minutes." He laughed as he spoke. The medic looked uncertainly at Nathan. "That's an order." Nathan added. No longer left with a choice, the medic slowly strode out the door.

"Good riddance. That kid couldn't read. I ask for one book, and he can't get it right. There are only half a dozen over there." Darin exclaimed.

"I'll get it. Which one?" he asked as he ventured over to the small shelf.

"It's the blue one, right in the middle." She replied, pointing from her seated position, leaning against the wall at the head of the wall. He grabbed it right off and she sighed with relief. He glanced at the title and chuckled.

"_20,000 leagues under the sea_. Boy, that brings back a few memories." He handed it to her, and she accepted it with pleasure.

"Me too. Unfortunately, it's taken me twenty minutes to get my hands on it. Honestly, do they just let any kid into the medical navy these days?" she asked pleadingly.

"Probably." Nathan replied with another chuckle. She smiled and ran her hand over the leather cover of the book. "Is that the same one that you had in 92'?" Nathan asked. She nodded.

"We've gone through a lot. Me and the book. Me and you. Me and you and the book." She said softly. He nodded his agreement. She looked up from her precious story and gazed at him. "Where have you been all week?" she asked, fearing the answer somewhat. She knew she said something serious, and she didn't jump the gun with it. she thought she was going to die, and she confessed something she had felt for nearly forty years.

"Two things. Helping repair the damage you did in section 23." He paused, then continued. "And the other, just thinking." She smiled.

"What could you possibly have to think about?" she murmured somewhat sarcastically. He wasn't sure if she wanted him to hear, but he did nonetheless. He smirked softly to himself.

"I've been thinking about what you said, and about the forty years that we've known each other." He said softly. She didn't say anything, so he continued, slowly. Only he couldn't think of what to say. She settled her gaze on his face. His eyes rose to meet hers.

He couldn't think of anything to do, so he did what his heart had told him to do every day that week. He got closer to her and sat next

to her on the bed. Their eyes stared into each other and he took her face in his hands. She smiled, as did he. They both sort of predicted what happened next.

Their heads drew closer until their lips made contact. They kissed each other passionately, and both could feel their heart rates speed up. Their arms wrapped around each other, and the thought of breathing escaped them.

For in the past week, Bridger had searched his heart, mind and soul. And all three had come up with the same answer. He loved her too. He did love Carol when he met her, when he married, when she died. Part of him still loved him. But he loved Darin. He loved her back.

End
file.